

1690
+ p 26
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A

SERMON

PREACHED

Feb. 2. 16⁸⁹/₉₀.

WITH
An Addition of what was further
designed on that Subject.

By RICHARD PEARSON,
Rector of St. Michael Crooked-lane.

M O A

Tenere non potes, potes non perdere.

L O N D O N,

Printed by J. Redmayne. 1690.

19⁶ + 152
120 + 18

SERMON

PREACHED

THis Discourse was preached only to pag. 17.
the further Prosecution and Continuance
of it (which you are here also presented with)
being interrupted through some Circumstances
which need not be now repeated. God Almighty
grant that the Whole may find Success with the
Reader, answerable to the sincere Intentions of
the Author.

RICHARD PEARSON

ROBERT ST. MICHAEL CROSSLAND

ROM.

Tenore non potes, potes non perdes.

L O N D O N

Printed by J. Reymond. 1690.

W. A. Gould. Oct. 27. 1917.

ROM. II. XXI.

*Thou therefore which teachest another,
teachest thou not thy self?*

THIS whole Chapter consists mostly of a severe Investive against the seducing Teachers of the *Gnostick* Sect, who though to avoid Persecution, and to keep themselves in a whole Skin, they basely temporized and sided, as they saw Occasion, with each of those Three disagreeing Parties, were yet indeed themselves neither Sincere Christians, nor Honest Jews, nor Good Pagans. And though they vaunted themselves for the only Knowing, and most Profound Doctors, yet their Lives were no other than a manifest Contradiction even to their own Doctrins; whilst they both practised and freely allowed the same Things in themselves, for which they most sharply Condemned others. A thing so extremely Unnatural and Ridiculous, that the Apostle here in my Text, Appeals to their Consciences, and is willing, even in their own Case, to make themselves the Judges of the monstrous Folly and Absurdity of such Proceedings.—
Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thy self?

B

In

In Discourſing of which more than Self-answering
 Queſtion, I ſhall follow this Method; and obſerve,

First, That they who undertake to be publick
 Teachers and Inſtructors are indispensably bound, never
 to deliver any Doctrin unto others, but ſuch only, both
 the Truth of which they do firſt moſt firmly believe,
 and are ready alſo, in ſpite of the utmoſt Hazards to
 put in practice their own ſelves: And that to be con-
 trarily affected, or diſpoſed is monſtrouſly Abſurd and
 Unnatural, moſt Shameful and Abominable.

Secondly, That notwithstanding this, and as Abſurd
 as it is, yet this is ſo far from being impoſſible, or any
 new Thing, that ſcarce any Thing is, or has been more
 common, almoſt in all Ages of the World, than inſtan-
 ces of ſuch Perſons, whoſe Lives and Practice have
 been a flat Contradiction to their own Doctrins.

Thirdly, I ſhall conſider ſome of the great Evils and
 miſchievous Effects upon others, that are too naturally
 conſequent from the Conſideration of a multitude of
 ſuch Offenders.

Laſtly, I ſhall offer to you ſome proper Conſidera-
 tions and Advice, by way of Antidote or Remedy
 againſt the Poyſon, and Infection of ſuch moſt ſcan-
 dalous Examples.

First I am to ſhew, That they who undertake to be
 publick Teachers and Inſtructors are indispensably bound,
 never to deliver any Doctrin unto others, but ſuch only,
 both the Truth of which they do firſt moſt firm-
 ly believe, and are ready alſo, in ſpite of the utmoſt
 Hazards to put in practice their own ſelves: And
 that to be contrarily affected, or diſpoſed is mon-
 ſtrouſly

stroufly Absurd and Unnatural, most Shameful and Abominable.

'Tis agreeable to the course of Nature, as well as the Rules of Christian Simplicity; and such for which we have our Blessed Saviour's own Example, That we should first do our Duty our selves before we presume to teach others. He who Preaches experimentally, and not meerly from his Head, but what comes from his very Heart and Life; nothing but what he himself verily believes and practiseth, such a one will far more effectually work upon his Hearers; who well perceiving that the Man himself is in good earnest, will easily be moved, by what he says, to the love of Vertue, and the practice of their Duty; as powerfully encouraged to the same, by the most evident Demonstration both of the Necessity, Happiness, and Possibility of the Thing, from the very Example of him who exhorts thereto. And how acceptable is the Speech of such a one, whose Heart, and Tongue, and Hand, (Men know) do mutually agree and go together? And how apt are all tolerably well disposed Persons to hang upon the Lips of such a one? Whilst what he says has quite another kind of Relish and Success, than the very self-same Words would have, if delivered to them by any other Person not so qualified: From whose Mouth, perhaps, they would have no other Effect upon them, than an eloquent Oration repeated by a Parrot; which could serve only to move Laughter. There is scarce any Object more Shameful or Absurd, than a Person altogether rude and unpractised in the particular Art, or Science, which he publicly professeth. He appears ridiculous in the Judgment of all, and every Man is apt to treat such a one with deserved Contempt and Scorn. And by how

much any Profession happens to be in it self the more generally useful and beneficial, by so much the more ridiculous still does that Man render himself, who without any Skill or Practice therein, sets up for a Master; and having never sufficiently learnt himself, does yet take upon him to teach the same to others. But of all others, an immoral Philosopher, and much more a vicious Christian Divine, who Preaches one Thing to others, and himself Acts the quite contrary to it, is certainly the most fulsom Contradiction, and absurd Spectacle in the whole World. So that, in this case, the Poet spoke the common Sense of all Mankind, when he said; *μὴν σφισιν ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἐκαστος*, *I abominate such a Teacher, as has not yet taught himself.* That of Eliphaz to Job, had it been a true one, would indeed have been a very shameful Accusation, Job 4. 3, 4, 5. *Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak Hands. Thy Words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble Knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.* Nor indeed can any one, who is to correct the Manners of others, and pretends to be a Spiritual Doctor, have a more sharp and reproachful Reflexion cast upon him, than the just Application of that Proverb in the Gospel; *Physician, heal thy self.* To hear Vice correct Sin; one who is himself in actual Rebellion, Preach up to others Loyalty and Obedience; to behold a practical Atheist, or a debauched Epicure, reading to others a serious Lecture of Conscience, or a Homily of Mortification and Self-denial, are certainly Things naturally apt to make a Man's Blood boyl within him, and his Breast to swell again, with a most just Indignation, at the intollerable Pride

Pride and Injustice, at the extreme Folly, Vanity, and most Damnable Hypocrisie of such a Monster. For indeed, of all these, and of several other detestable Vices and Follies, there is always in every such Person a most accursed Complication.

For First, How strangely unjust is it for a Fellow-mortal to prescribe such Rules and Abstinences, to endeavour to impose such Shackles and Restraints upon others, as he can by no means endure to be concluded by his own self? This is, in him at least, no other than a manifest Usurpation upon the supposed Liberties of his Fellow-creatures, and looks as if his design therein were only to monopolize and ingross Vice, and that he would not have others to offend, meerly to gain a larger Field for his own Lust; and for fear he should not otherwise have room enough to Sin himself. Again, what can be more Proud, Vain and Arrogant, than a behaviour that argues as if such Men thought themselves Creatures meerly designed to dictate to the rest of Mankind? Or, as if by ascending up into the Pulpit, they were withal so far Elevated above the Condition of their Hearers, as to be wholly exempt from all those common Obligations of Men and Christians: Or that their Souls were quite of another Make, and might be made happy upon far easier Terms, and by quite different Methods, than those of other Morals.

Nor are such Monsters less full of the most abominable Hypocrisie. For, to be sure, they who make it so their business, to inform others what they are to believe and do, would, by their so doing, fain seem themselves both to believe, and to be very ready also to practise their own Duty. They would be thought likewise

likewise to have their Hearts glowing hot with Charity for other Mens Souls, and full of Zeal for God's Glory. Whereas, alas! they are meer Infidels and Painted Sepulchres, and there is really nothing of all this in them. For all Charity begins at home; and no Man can Love another more than he does himself: So that he who is so negligent of himself, as to be wholly regardless of his own Souls welfare, can have no true regard for that of his Neighbour. And therefore, after all their Profane Eloquence and Religious Cant (for how True and Orthodox soever it may be in it self, to such Men themselves it is no better) after all is done, let them pretend what they will, 'Tis not Charity or true Zeal that puts them upon the Performance, but some other base and much inferior Motive; which can be nothing else but either a desire of filthy Lucre, or a principle of Ambition and Vain-glory.

In short, The Proceeding of those who Preach well, and yet Live ill, is most ridiculously Foolish and Absurd, and their Condition extremely Miserable and Desperate, upon many accounts and reasons.

For First, Suppose such Men could indeed have Charity enough to design therein any thing of their Neighbours welfare: (as I have shewn they cannot) Yet what reason have they to expect, that any thing they say, should ever prove Successful to that purpose, or tend in the conclusion to any thing else but their own Reproach? For who, I pray, would ever be perswaded by that Man, who, after he has done Preaching should plainly tell his Auditors, That he himself did not believe one Word of what he had delivered to them? But now every Man, whose habit and course of Life is a
manifest

manifest contradiction to his own Doctrin, does, in effect, say as much as this comes to. Several of the Antient Emperors of *China* were so weak, as to believe a sort of Physicians, who made it their business to study, and ever and anon pretended to have found out an Expedient to make them become Immortal here; but should any one of those Juglers, when he himself lay just a Dying, have affirmed, though with never so much confidence, That he had indeed found out a Secret, but would not discover it, unless the Emperor would first settle such a certain Estate upon the Discoverer's Children: I suppose, in this case, that none of them could have been so Foolish, as to credit the Assertion; but must needs have seen through the ridiculousness of the Imposture: In that had the Man really found out any such Matter, he would certainly have first made use of it himself to prevent his own Death. So those Persons do enough perfectly to discredit their own Doctrin, who tell other Men, that the practice of such and such Vertues, is the only way to be happy here, and to obtain eternal Life hereafter; whilst yet they notoriously neglect to practise the same themselves. And, indeed, this Doctrin could not reasonably have been believed, even from our Saviour himself had he himself lived ill. But yet here now I would not be so understood, as if I affirmed, that a bad Man can never be instrumental towards the Conversion of others; (for the same Motives, which for want of belief, or consideration, prevail not upon himself, may yet from his Mouth be Successful upon others; and God does sometimes so bless his own Word, though conveyed through such impure Conduit-pipes, as to render it effectual) but my meaning is only this; That the quite contrary

contrary practice of the Preacher does very much discredit the best Doctrine, and is such a very great disadvantage thereto, that, considering how the generality of Men stand affected, it does but seldom prove Successful; nor can Men well Credit or Embrace what such a one says, meerly upon the score of his own Authority. And though such Men do happen to perswade some, yet

Secondly, in the mean-time, They must needs upon other accounts, make their Profession become extremely Difficult and Unpleasant to themselves. For every thing that is Forced and Unnatural is always so: But what can be more Unnatural, than to Force their Heads to be almost continually taken up with such matters, as their Hearts are not at all affected with, but have really the greatest aversion to? To which I may also add, whilst they are Meditating what to say to others, how impossible it is for them to avoid being ever and anon tormented with the severe Stings and Lashes of their own accusing Conscience. To say nothing, how their Employment Forces them to provoke others, to be continually Scoffing at, and Reviling them with their own Doctrines; whilst all their Exhortations and Reproofs do naturally recoil upon themselves, and are made to fly in their own Faces, and turned into so many bitter Satyrs against their own selves. There being nothing more true than that of *Seneca*, who pronounceth concerning such Philosophers, as instruct others well, but themselves live ill; *Ad suum ipsorum esse convitium desertos*, That they are Eloquent only to their own Reproach.

Thirdly, The Condition of such Persons is very Desperate, and they must needs be extremely hardned against Repentance, as well by their having got a habit
to

to contemn all the Holy Directions, and by their having so frequently resisted and despised all those Powerful Motives and Considerations, which they have made it their Trade to suggest to others: As also because their Pride of Heart, in being professed Teachers, makes them wholly Deaf to the Pious Exhortations and Remembrances, and perfect Proof against all the Charitable Rebukes of others; whilst any thing of this Nature is usually rejected by them with the highest Contempt and Scorn. Just as the Phareisaick Doctors treated the poor Man in the Gospel — *Thou wert altogether conceived and born in Sin, and dost thou presume to teach us?* John 9. 34.

Fourthly, Another great Misery is, That such Persons cannot (in all probability) long continue to preach True and Orthodox Doctrin unto others, but (as most other Hereticks have been moved to do, upon this very score) will find themselves forced, at last, to change the Truth they have all along asserted, for some vile Lie or other, that may better agree with their own vile Lust. And this, as well the better to avoid the Stings of their own Consciences, as also hoping thereby to silence the Out-cries of others, who are apt to be continually upbraiding them with the great absurdity of living against what they Teach; though, at the same time, they fall into no less ridiculous a Contradiction; being forced to say one Thing to Day, and the quite contrary thereto the very next. And however, if nothing of this prevails with such a one to broach Error; yet if there happen any extraordinary Revolution, or such an Alteration of publick Circumstances, that his former sound Doctrin may chance to cost him dear, or prejudice him in his Worldly Interest, it is then impossible

possible for him any longer to hold out ; nor can he find in his Heart to espouse a Persecuted Truth, but is easily frighted into the most shameful Recantation, or Abjuration of all he had said before.

Lastly, Though such a one could continue always to teach Truth only ; yet whilst he Acts quite contrary to his Preaching, all his own Sermons will be sure to rise up in Judgment against him, and serve only to give Sentence against himself, and plunge him into all the Shame and Misery of Self-condemnation at the last Day ; when it shall be said to every one no better qualified—*Out of thy own Mouth shalt thou be judged, thou wicked Servant. Thou art inexcusable, O Man, whosoever thou art that judgest : For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self, for thou that judgest doest the same things. And thinkest thou this, O Man, that judgest them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God ?* These now are some of the great Mischiefs which these Wretches bring upon themselves, by thus taking God's Law into their Mouths : (for as to the Evils which they bring thereby upon other Men, I shall speak of them hereafter under another Head) And in short, there is so much Folly and Disgrace, so much Misery and Absurdity attending the Circumstances and Condition of the Persons I am now describing, that there is not the most sordid Trade or Occupation you can think of (though so mean and trivial, that 'tis not fit so much as to name it in this place) but 'twere both far more Happy and Honourable for a Man to be of it, rather than be an Infidel Divine, or Self-contradicting Preacher. And, indeed, did not sad Experience testify the contrary, one would be tempted to think it a thing wholly impossible, that any reasonable

sonable Creature should ever find in his Heart to be guilty of such Monstrous absurdity. But this now brings me to

The Second general Thing I am to shew, *viz.* That notwithstanding all this, and as Absurd as it is, yet this is so far from being impossible, or any new Thing, that scarce any Thing is, or has been more common, almost in all Ages of the World, than instances of such Persons, whose Lives and Practice has been a flat Contradiction to their own Doctrine. The Heathen Philosophers made it their Profession to instruct others in the Paths of Virtue; and yet how little some of them observed their own Rules, and how grossly defective several of them were in their own Morals, is a Thing acknowledged by most Writers of their several Times, and indeed too Evident and Notorious to need any Elaborate insisting on. For the Proof of this, a Man need go no farther than the witty *Lucian*, who sufficiently Scoffs at, and Exposes most of them upon this very account. And every one who has been the least conversant in Books, knows how full the Poetical Satyrists are of the severest Invectives to this purpose. Nay *Seneca* himself, that most celebrated Philosopher, could find reason to complain of several of the same Profession in his time, *Qui Philosophiam Ostentationem scientiæ, non legem morum putant; hoc turpiores, quod in eo ipso peccant, cuius magistri esse volunt, artemque vitæ professi, delinquant in vitâ. Who take up the profession of Philosophy meerly as an occasion to shew their Learning, rather than that they esteem it necessary to square their own Actions thereby; in this, so much the more abominable, because they offend in that very thing of which they would fain be thought Masters; and live ill themselves, even*

whilst they profess to teach others the Art of living well. Nor was the very Author of these Words himself altogether free from the severe Censure contained under them : Since, if we may Credit that excellent Historian *Dio*, the very same *Seneca*, who had written so much about the contempt of Riches, was guilty of the most horrible Extortion ; excited *Nero* to the Murther of *Agrippina*, *ὡς πολλοῖς καὶ ἀξιότοις ἀνδράσιν ἐγένετο*, as many, and those Person most worthy of belief, relate, saith the same Writer. And still, after he spoken so many great Things relating to the contempt of Death, when at last he was commanded to die, for having conspired against that Tyrant, he shewed himself so much a Coward, and so Fearful to try the grand Experiment, that he was fain to perswade (or rather force) his Wife *Paulina* to shew him the way to die, by first cutting her Veins with his own Hand ; as the before mentioned Historian still gives us the Account. But why do I speak of poor Heathen ? When we find God himself so frequently complaining in Holy Scripture, even concerning the Jewish Priests and Doctors, whose Lips should have preserved Knowledge, that they caused his People to err, by their ill Example. And how does our Blessed Saviour tax the Scribes and Doctors of the Law, *For binding heavy burdens upon others, and grievous to be born, whilst they themselves would not touch them so much as with one of their Fingers ?* Matth. 23. 4. i. e. They did not so much as once think of practising those Things, which they commanded and prescribed to others. How often does he inveigh against them for saying, and not doing ? For pretending to see, and to pull out the Mote in their Brothers Eye, whilst a Beam was in their own ? In short, the frequent Occasion of their observing such Doctors, whose Words

Words and Actions, whose Speech and Lives agreed not, made it become an usual Proverb among the Hebrews concerning such Persons — *Their Voice is the Voice of Jacob, but their Hands are the Hands of Esau.* So true is that of the Son of Syrach, Eccles. 37. 19. *There is one that is Wise, and Teacheth many, and yet is unprofitable to himself.* Nor shall we find the times of Christianity to have been so happy, as to want Examples of this kind. For though in the Age of the Apostles, and for some time after, as the common sort of Christians lived much better, so the Ministers of the Gospel did generally both believe, and live up to what themselves taught others; yet in process of time, and by degrees, the case began to be much altered; especially at, and after the times of *Constantine*: Insomuch that that Wise and Religious Emperor was often forced to remind many of the grave Bishops themselves concerning their Profession, and roundly enough to reprehend them for their Contentious and Ambitious Tempers; as *Eusebius* and others may inform us.

And too many others well deserved that severe Censure, which the Heathen Historian *Ammianus Marcellinus* (with no less Honour to the Christian Religion than with Disgrace, if justly applied, to the Person) passeth upon one of them; who speaking of *George of Alexandria*, saith, *That he did this and the other ill Thing, Professionis suæ oblitus, quæ nihil nisi justum suadet & lenè, &c. Being forgetful of his Profession, which dictates nothing but what is mild and righteous.* And still if we come home to our own Country, we may find the Pious and Learned *Gildas* sadly complaining of the same Scandal, and attributing the fatal Excision of the Ancient Britans, and their being Over-run and Conquered

quered by the Pagan *Saxons*, chiefly to the Greediness and Ambition, and general Corruption of the then Bishops and Pastors of the Island; such, he shews, was the notorious Repugnancy of their Actions to their own Doctrins which they taught others.

It would be endless and invidious, as well as unnecessary for me to descend to later Times: And I could heartily wish, that every Man were not furnished with too great a variety of Instances to this purpose, even within the compass of his own Observation. I shall therefore conclude this unpleasant Theam with this following Remark; (and I pray God avert the Omen, as to our own particulars) There is not a more fatal sign of the approaching Ruin of any Church and Nation, than when the generality of her Spiritual Guides, do by their practice grossly Contradict, and give the Lie to the Truths which they have constantly maintained: Which makes them ready for any Innovation, and usually obliges them, for their supposed Credit and Defence, at length publickly to change and renounce their former Right Principles also, and Orthodox Doctrins; both which are necessarily attended with such ill consequents upon other Men, as are of the most dreadful Apprehension.

And so this brings me now to my

Third general Head, *viz.* To consider some of the great Evils and mischievous Effects upon others, that are naturally consequent upon the consideration of a multitude of such Offenders.

And here now, as well for brevity sake, as better order, I shall reduce what I have to say under these Three Heads.

First,

First, The Evils relating to the Atheistical and Profane. Secondly, To the Weak and Ignorant sort of Christians. And Thirdly, To those who are sincere and constant in the profession of the Truth.

First, As to those who are already Atheistical and Profane; this must needs tend very much to confirm and strengthen them in their Wickedness and Infidelity; give them no small occasion of Joy and Triumph; and mightily encrease their Number. To Argue and Dispute, does well in its place, and is both very useful and cessary. And it is easie enough, even at these Weapons, to baffle the stoutest Atheist; but yet (as *St. Paul* speaks in another case) there is to be shewn a far more excellent way than this; and, when all is done, the most effectual expedient is not so much to Dispute, as to Live down Atheism and to Confute it, by Holy Conversation. 'Tis easie for the Preacher to silence the Profane Wit, and put him to a nonplus, by what he may say in the Pulpit: But 'tis what he does, when out of it, that must effectually convince him. Which, if it happens to be notoriously disagreeable, this of it self, the Atheist is apt to conclude, is a sufficient Answer to all the former Arguments; since if the Preacher himself did really believe them, he could never find in his Heart (as he observes he does) so to live in the plain contempt of any of those Commands, which he acknowledges to have God for their Author. And I could tell you, to this purpose of certain Atheists, who in some relenting First a little before their Death, plainly acknowledged to their Friends, That even in the time of their highest Infidelity, the sight of any Person, who they had reason to belive, did really live up to his own Preaching,

Preaching, did constantly strike terror into their Minds, and was apt to put them into a fit of Trembling : Whereas, on the contrary, nothing (they found) tended more to harden and confirm them in their Atheism and extravagant Courses, than the observation of several Church-men, who shewed such a Greedy and Ambitious Temper, and lived after such a manner, that they could not be thought to be in good earnest, or to believe themselves when they talk'd to others of the absolute necessity of Holiness, Mortification and Self-denial ; when they who in the Pulpit would seem Religion's main Champions, do yet shew themselves meer Runnagadoes in their Lives and Actions, then begin all the professed Enemies thereof to Applaud and Hug themselves, they delight to fix and dwell upon the pleasing Object ; such Persons become their continual Theam, and Argument, both of Discourse and Recreation ; nor is there any other Spectacle so perfectly Reviving and Delicious to them. And accordingly all the Traps and Snares, and Temptations imaginable are commonly made use of, by Men of this Spirit, to bring in as many as ever they can of the Sons of *Lew* to a Sinful compliance with them. In which, when they happen to be Successful, they are apt with the greatest extasies of Joy and Triumph to cry out (like the great Mathematician upon his new Discovery.) We have now found out the way to quiet and appease our own Minds ; and let these Black-coats, for the time to come, say what they please, their Doctrins or Reproofs shall never any more trouble or torment us. For since we see they can afford to act the very self-same Things, from which they have made it their business to deter others, we may certainly enough conclude (say they) that they themselves

selves believe not what they Teach ; but as to matters of Religion are perfectly of our Minds, and would be sure as plainly to declare no less, did not their Trade and Interest hinder them. Thus if the major part of Spiritual Guides can be at any time induced to transgress, these Men readily conclude therefrom, concerning all the rest of the same Profession. And as for those who keep their Garments unspotted, and continue in their Uprightness and Sincerity ; the Atheist endeavours all he can to persuade himself, that they are really no better than the rest at bottom, only more secret and reserved Sinners, and a sort of more cunning and demure Hypocrites.

So that Ministers, by what they Act, do of necessity either the most Good, or the most Mischief to Religion of any other People in the whole World. And an Apostasie in them either from the Faith, or good Manners, is always attended with a general Defection of others. Nor are Atheists and Infidels, and all the black Squadrons of the Prince of Darkness so much countenanced, or encouraged by any Thing to march on boldly in open Triumph, as by the Revolt and Accession of such Men to their Party. And accordingly, you may observe, That as no where do Church Men Live more loosely, or are more Ambitious or Fond of the World, that in *Rome* and *Italy*, so no where are the People more generally Atheistical and Profane, than in those very places. Nay, indeed, when in any other place, the main Body of the Clergy suffer themselves to be hooked in, or engaged to act quite contrary but to any one Truth, which they have before constantly Professed and Maintained ; this of it self is a mighty advantage to Irreligion, and Naturally makes all else they have, or

can assert fall into Discredit; whilst they give thereby but too great occasion to Men of thinking, that they say, or do nothing at all out of a true Principle of Conscience: But that they may easily be induced to offend, also in any other particular, upon the like Tryal or Temptation so to do: Which will always be sure in like manner to be excused, and termed by them a case of absolute Necessity.

And thus much now may suffice to shew how much the practice of Self-contradicting Preachers tends to confirm, rejoyce, and encrease the Number of Atheists.

But then Secondly, As to the Weak and Ignorant sort of Christians, the consideration of this creates many, and most dreadful Evils. For, either First, It is apt to make them take up with a stupid and brutish Imitation, and content themselves without any more a do, or farther scruple, securely to follow the bad Examples of such Teachers. And how ordinary is it to hear many simple and tollerably well meaning People after this manner Arguing with themselves? It's very true, that if I were left to my self, I should be very apt to startle at this, or that Action, and could hardly find in my Heart to venture on it. But now when I see so many great and good Men, the famous Doctors of the Church, hetherto so generally renowned for their Piety and Learning, securely leading me the way, in the self-same Thing; Why should I poor Wretch, think my self so much Wiser or Better than these great Lights, as to be afraid to follow them? Or why should I be so Foolish to scruple it? Especially, since withal my compliance therewith does so evidently tend to my Secular Interest and Advantage? I cannot but confess indeed, That I have often heard many of the same Persons heretofore seem most severely

severely to condemn the self-same Action, as a Crime most Heinous and Abominable: But yet now, they tell me, that the different Circumstances quite alter the nature of the Case; and they bring themselves off with several other nice distinctions. Which though, I confess, (dull Soul that I am) I cannot understand; yet they themselves doubtless do, whose Learning is so much transcendent. However, since they who know so much, and have done so well in other particulars, seem to be well satisfied about the Lawfulness of this, as to venture their own Souls, Why should not I likewise venture mine upon the same bottom?

Thus weak Judgments are naturally apt to be led more by precedent than precept. And what *Solomon* observes of the wicked Man in general, is Emphatically true of the Persons I am now describing; *They speak with their Feet, and teach with their Fingers*, Prov. 6. 13. And how many Thousands of poor Souls, who might be for ever Happy, would they but take more safe Methods, continually run headlong upon their own Ruin, by securely relying upon the erroneous Examples of their admired Teachers, in spite of all their former Doctrins to the contrary?

Or Secondly, If notwithstanding all the little Salvo's, false Colours, and Palliations that can be made use of by such Spiritual Jugglers to amuse them, some People happen to be of such natural good parts, or unprejudiced Understandings, as plainly to discover, both the heinous Nature of the matter of Fact, and the evident Repugnancy and Inconsistence between the practice thereof, and the former Principles and Doctrins of their present Teachers; then the notorious Prevarication and Insincerity of those Guides and Pastors, whom they observe

complying therewith, is apt to create such a mighty Scandal and Offence in the Minds of such Persons, as to tempt them utterly to forsake the Church and Profession they are of, (though in it self the best and purest in the World) and to betake themselves into the Tents of the Adversaries on the one Hand, or the other, and to joyn Communion with any Hereticks or Schismatics they shall most phancy. Among whom (they are apt to perswade themselves) that though they may not perhaps find so much Truth, yet they shall meet with much more Honesty and Sincerity: Since, they think, they have always observed a far better Consistency and Agreement between their Practice and Principles, than at present in the generality of those, whose Communion they are therefore now tempted to forsake.

Or, Lastly, If some Mens better Experience and Observation of the World happens so far to acquaint them likewise with the gross Errour, Deceit, and Insincerity, that is too generally in other Parties and Professions, as that they are forced to despair of mending their Pasture, and as bad as they are at present, know not where to better themselves by a removal; then presently they are from hence tempted to run into down-right Scepticism and Libertinism, and to set down in a perfect Disregard and Contempt of all Religion in general. And what more natural in this case, than for them after this manner to argue with themselves: Since the several Spiritual Guides, who pretend themselves appointed to conduct us, cannot agree about the way themselves, nor are at all consistent in their Practice and Doctrine, either with others, or even with their own selves; Why should we therefore any more trouble our Heads or Hearts about any thing of Religion? For do not these
Men

Men themselves by their Practice, as good as tell us, that they do not believe there are any Rewards or Punishments to be expected hereafter? And why should we therefore imagine, that there is either Right or Wrong, either Good or Evil in any Actions, any farther only than as the same may tend to our present Pleasure, Honour, or Advantage here in the World, or to the contrary? Commend us therefore, for the time to come, to the most Excellent and Divine *Hobs*, whose several Golden Volumes, in our Judgments, well deserve to be chained up, and supply the place both of the Bible, Homilies, and Book of Martyrs, and his Memory to be duely celebrated, as the only true Confessor, and Father of our Church. Such a fatal Influence now, and most sad Effect as this, is such Mens Practice too apt to have upon weaker Christians and enough to stumble all others, but those only, whose thorough Acquaintance with Religion, and well grounded Experience both of the Truth and Happines of the same, has placed them above the force of such Temptations, and sufficiently secured them against the Scandal of such Examples.

But, yet Thirdly, Even as to those who still remain Sincere and Constant in the true Profession, a Multitude of such Apostatical Offenders must needs create to them extreme grief of Heart, and bring upon them many other Evils and hard Tryals. And though they, I confess, who are yet Strangers to the true Power of Godliness, may perhaps be apt to wonder, that I should here rank their Grief upon this account in the very First front of their severe Sufferings; yet they whose Hearts are inflamed with Christian Charity towards their Brethren, and have a quick Sense of the honour of Religion, and are endued with a true Zeal for God's Glory, will easily perceive

perceive that this is no such slight matter. For if *David* was so highly concerned, that, as for his own Sins, he mingled his Drink with Weeping, so he used to send forth whole streams of Tears for other Mens, *Pl. 119. 136 Rivers of Waters run down mine Eyes, because Men keep not thy Law*; If *Isaiah* likewise grieved so much for the People, *That he would have none so much as to attempt to comfort him, Is. 22. 4.* If the Prophet *Jeremiah* professeth, *That his Soul should weep in secret Places for their Pride, and his Eyes weep sore, and run down with Tears*; Nay, if still, as if all this were too little, he wishes for new Springs to supply the course of his Grief, and to keep the Current running, *Jer. 9. 1. O that my Head were Waters, and mine Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that I might weep Day and Night, &c.* And all these did this only for the Sins of the common People: Oh! what Rivers then, nay what whole Oceans of Tears will not a truly Devout Soul be ready to shed, to see those who should be the prime Directors and main Shepherds of the Flock, cause others to stray and wander by their ill Examples? No Words certainly are sufficient to express, nor can any other Man imagine what Heart breaking Pangs, and highest accents of Sorrow this sad consideration must needs create, but only the Soul it self that feels the same. Such Grief as is almost insupportable, and would be beyond all possibility of comfort, were it not (as I shall hereafter shew) somewhat alleviated by some other considerations. But still, besides this Grief of Heart it costs them, it occasions also many other hardships to come upon them.

For, First, All the Hatred and Contempt, all the Malicious Slander, Obloquy and Scorn, all the Hardships, Inconveniences and Persecutions, which the smaller
number

number of those who are Sincere, and still remain True to their Principles, are usually forced in such cases to suffer from the common Sort, for refusing to swim with the Stream, and because they cannot in Conscience comply with the general practice; all these Evils, I say, are originally owing to the Multitude of their false and revolted Brethren of the same Order with them. Without the countenance and encouragement of whose numerous Examples, the rest of their now Enemies would never, in all probability, have had either the Will or Power, either the Opportunity or Boldness, to cast upon them such Indignities and Affronts, and to treat them with such very hard entertainments. Nay, indeed, however such lapsed Doctors may, for ends best known to themselves, for some time shew some Courtesy and Civility towards their poor afflicted Brethren, from whom they have so shamefully departed, and may, perhaps, at first entertain a real compassion for the hard Circumstances of their Condition; and cannot, for the present, so much as suspect that ever they shall be worse affected towards them: Yet this seldom lasts long, but they fall by degrees, first to a less Respect, then to a Coldness, and at last to an absolute Hatred of their Persons. Which also first discovers it self in disparaging Language — A small company of pitiful inconsiderable Men; a few self-conceited, sour, obstinate Fellows, who must needs make themselves Wise and Righteous over much, and more Consciencious than all their betters. Anon the very name and sight of the Men becomes Odious to them and intollerable, as giving occasion to their Consciences of upbrading them; so that they find themselves obliged, in order to their more Tranquility, to endeavour far enough to remove such troublesome.

Eye.

Eye-fores: And accordingly enter into consultation with those in Wisd. 2. 12. and following Verses. *Let us lie in wait for the Righteous: because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings; he upbraideth us with our offending the Law — He was made to reprove our Thoughts. He is grievous unto us, even to behold.* And thus they usually proceed on, till at last they turn the most furious and implacable Enemies to them in the whole World; and if they have an opportunity become the Authours and Fomentors of the most severe Persecution against them: As we are supplied with sufficient Instances of this nature, both in the Arian and Donatist Bishops and Pastors, and other Primitive Apostates. And how cutting a thing now, think you, must it needs be to receive such treatment from the Hands of those very Persons, who were formerly their intimate Companions and most familiar Friends? Who used both to enter into, and take sweet Counsel in the Houses of God together with them: But now are turned their mortal Foes, meerly because they Honestly persevere in the practice, as well as profession of those very Truths; which the others also no less constantly taught in the same Holy Places, and made a shift to practise too, till such times as they found themselves likely to be losers, if they continued to do so any longer.

Thus having shewn you some of the mischievous Effects of such scandalous Examples upon others; I now proceed to that which is indeed the most useful and necessary part of my Task, and what I accordingly at first did chiefly design; viz. To offer to you some proper Considerations and Advice, by way of Antidote or Remedy against the poisonous infection of such Examples.

In the performance of which Task, I am in hopes to make both my self and the well disposed Reader some part of amends, for that former great grief of heart, without which (I'm confident) neither he nor I have been hitherto conversant in the foregoing speculations; on which, I profess I should never once have entred, much less now troubled the World with them, had it not been meerly for the sake of what ensues, and (as 'tis always necessary first to discover the causes, nature, and effects of a Distemper, in order to its Cure) wholly to make way for, and in order to the better success of this my last both more pleasing and profitable undertaking. To which therefore I shall now apply my self, with all imaginable cheerfulness and Alacrity: as deeply mindful of that, excellent Rule of *Plutarch*, Οὐ δὴ τὰς ἀγῶνας βούλει ἀλλ' ἐλπίσθαι, *It becomes not a good man to spend his time so much in complaints of others failings, as in endeavouring to correct, and prescribe Remedies.*

And first, Then this very consideration of the commonness of this evil, may it self very well be made use of, as no contemptible Remedy or Antidote against the scandal of such examples. And since, as I shewed before, this is so far from being any new thing; that scarce any thing is, or has been, more common almost in all Ages of the World, than instances of such Persons, whose Lives and Practices have been a flat contradiction to their own Doctrins; so much the less reason then hast thou to take offence, from thy own particular Observation of the same frailties. For, in this Case, no temptation is suffered to befall thee, but such as has been common also unto others before thee. All holy men have been (more or less) exercised with,

gone through, and nobly Conquer'd the same Tryals. No Age, or place affords not some such Doctors, who act quite contrary to the Truths which they Teach others. And if the Observation of this were indeed a sufficient reason to make men fall out with Religion and their Duty, there could then scarce ever have been in the whole World from the very beginning of it, so many Righteous Persons as that small number which would have saved *Sodom*; and Heaven must have been without People. So that whoever thou art, that from hence endeavourest to excuse thy self from Duty, and art resolved never to commence Saint thy self till thou canst first see all Ministers become such; know this, that thou art sure to continue both wicked and miserable for ever; and wouldst no less certainly have been so, even though thou thy self hadst had the liberty of chusing any other time, or place of the World, almost ever since the Creation of it.

But still you'll say, the extraordinary unhappiness of some particular Ages, may perhaps enable a Man, to object farther after this manner, I confess indeed, that what you've said is very true; and were they only some few inconsiderable Persons whom I saw thus acting quite contrary to their own avowed Doctrins, this I could have made a shift to have born with, as being no more than what I should in reason have expected, nor could I therefore have been so much offended thereat. But now that Case is quite different, and when I behold a very great multitude of such offenders, nay, when I observe the far greater number of those who have been generally accounted the most eminent for Piety as well as Learning, notoriously guilty of such a Defection; What would you have me to say, or think
of

of this matter? And how can I chuse, but be most grievously startled and offended at such an amazing sight, and monstrous conjunction of examples?

To which I Answer in the general, that when the Case really happens to be thus, (as sometimes, I confess, though more rarely, it does) this is indeed enough to shock an ordinary Faith, and greatly to stagger the weaker sort of Christians in their Religion, and course of Duty; nay, perhaps, it may well prove one of the greatest scandals and temptations, that even the most experienced and best resolved Christian can likely be exercised with: But yet when all is done (I shall shew) not such as is so altogether insuperable, but that by God's Grace, and the impartial use of reason, and a thorough consideration of things, we may be able to overcome, and be gloriously triumphant over it. In order to which blessed end, I shall distinctly consider in the Objection three several things. The Piety, the Learning, and the Multitude of such offenders.

First, Their supposed Piety and Holiness. In judging of which you may consider, how very liable men are to be deceived. For all is not presently Gold that glisters; and 'tis very possible that they whom thou so admiredst for their Piety, were all along from the very beginning, no better then mere Hypocrites. Since even such many times are prompted, through their Ambition and vain Glory, industriously to make a greater shew and glare, as to the external exercise of some Virtues, than those modest and humble Souls, whose Hearts are really endued with a sincere principle of Holiness and Religion. And though thou and others did well, and according to the Rules of Charity,

in believing them to be holy and sincere, so long as in their Lives and Actions you could not discover any plain Arguments to the contrary; yet after once these evidently appear, and the rough hands of *Esau* give the lye to the smooth voice of *Jacob*, the Hypocrisy of such Teachers is then sufficiently discovered, and they become self-condemned, nor does any Charity oblige us any longer to conclude that they were truly Pious before, but rather mere Hypocrites; who would have long before also have shewn themselves to have been no better, had they been assaulted with the same powerful temptations; which are now suffered to befall them, on purpose to unmask them to the World; and that (as I shall hereafter shew) for the great benefit and the advantage of the Church of God, and that they who are approved may also be made more manifest.

Or else, if we will needs suppose such Teachers to have been formerly truly Pious and Sincere, yet we may well credit our own Eyes, and safely conclude, that they are now ceased to be so. For certainly, 'tis possible for Men to fall from Grace. To be naturally and necessarily Good is the sole privilege of God himself; whilst no Creature is naturally impeccable; nor has God made any sort of Men any more indefectible, than infallible to their Understandings, as to their Manners; the Righteous may leave off to be Good, and do that which is Wicked and Abominable; and when he does so, all his former Righteousness is to be no more remembred either by God, or Man. And when all is done, that of *St. John* is the only firm and lasting Rule, whereby we are to judge in these cases; *He, and he only who doeth Righteousness is Righteous*: And since even the best have sometimes their failings, we are
not

not to follow them any farther, or to be led by the influence of their Examples, but only whilst we see them walking according to the Rules of God's holy Word: But when we behold them acting contrary thereto, to be so far from thinking this any licence for us to imitate, as on the contrary to be excited therefore to greater fear and caution, lest we also offend in like manner.

Secondly, As to the Learning of such Men you may consider, That Knowledge does not always, or necessarily make Men Good; nor is it any new Thing in the World to see Men very Learned, and yet at the same time very Wicked. Nay indeed, in many cases, Men could not Sin so against Conscience, nor arrive at such a Superlative degree in Wickedness, were they not first furnished with a more than ordinary share of Knowledge and Understanding.

Moreover, What more ordinary, and therefore what less strange, than to see a great deal of Knowledge without Charity? Which yet when unaccompany'd with this, can serve only to puff Men up with Pride to make them extremely Restless and Ambitious, and become so much the more like Devils to themselves and others.

And where is the Man, who, unless he has mind to expose his own Ignorance, will not easily allow both *Celsus*, *Porphyrius*, and even *Julian* the Apostate to have been Men of no ordinary degree of Learning? Nor can we deny very many, if not most, of the antient Hereticks to have been Persons profoundly both Knowing and Eloquent. Nay there's one I could name, who might he be permitted to appear in a Pulpit, and 'twere consistent with his Interest to deliver sound Doctrine, would be able enough by his Learning and Eloquence, easily to put down all Men for well preaching; nor is there

there the most accomplish'd Doctor living, but must resign up his Chair even to the Devil, and allow him the precedency, if meer Knowledge were the only Thing to be regarded: And yet that grand Apostate, with all his Learning, became, and still remains no less, but so much the more a Devil; nor do I know of any Man who is scandalized at him for so continuing.

Besides, it may help to hinder thy being over much offended at the bad Examples of such revolted Teachers, when thou shalt observe, (as it always happens in such cases) that they themselves with all their Learning, are not able to answer their own former Arguments, either for the Truth, or necessity of practising those sound Doctrins, which they before delivered and maintained: But when they attempt any thing of this nature, they usually do it so awkwardly and unhappily, and with such an evident byass upon them, as may sufficiently convince any impartial considerer, That they themselves give no credit to their own disproofs; nor are at all satisfied in what they say or write to the contrary of their first assertions. Whilst their whole procedure commonly amounts to no less, in the Eyes of all judicious Observators, than if they should make a plain Confession after this manner; such a Doctrin was indeed once very true, when we first delivered it; and though afterwards the same became, for some time very false, whilst it was not for our interest to observe, or be guided by it; yet now our turn is served, it is very true again, and will never be false any more, till such time as it shall happen in like manner, to be for our present advantage, to have it thought so. Thus, when learned Men are forced, to play fast and loose after this manner, and to fall into all the absurdities of self-contradiction, whilst

whilst they suffer themselves to be wholly guided by Secular motives; all their latter feeble attempts to destroy and discredit, may very well serve (if rightly considered) for the greater Establishment and Confirmation of those Truths, which they formerly maintained in their more calm and unprejudiced Temper. In short, since it is so ordinary, Why should it surprize you, or seem strange to behold Men very Learned, and yet at the same time extreamly fond of the World? How many have there always been since the declining times of Christianity who have searched and studied hard, and taken a great deal of pains to be skilful in the Scriptures, and knowing in the mysteries of Religion, not out of a love to Truth, or any right Intent to please God the better, but meerly that they might be applauded, and had in admiration by others, or that they might grow rich by their Knowledge? The ingenious *Picus Mirandula* sadly complains of this sordid Temper, as that fatal Disease with which some learned Men of his Age were grievously infected. *Who could not believe (saith he) that any one studied for Knowledge, out of any other design than such filthy Lucre.* And he speaks of Two, with whom he himself had some acquaintance, the one of which (though reputed a learned Man) was not ashamed to confess to him, That he could be heartily pleased to part with all his Knowledge, if he could sell it for such a sum: And the other, That he had rather be a Horse than what he was, if he could but have as much to live upon, as he desired; when yet that Person (saith the same Author) had already enough in reason for any contented Mind.

Now, since 'tis alas, but too common even for learned Men to be of this sordid Temper; Why should you then

then be so much offended to behold such Men, upon occasion, selling their Learning, and the Truth, by unsaying and contradicting what they had before said, and done rightly, when by their so doing, you plainly perceive them to get, or secure that very thing which they always prized more, and for the sake of which alone they at any time before put any value upon Truth or Knowledge? Thus, that of St. Paul, *Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present World*, may be generally applied also to all other Apostates howsoever learned.

But I now proceed, in the Third place, to the Multitude of such Examples. Where, first, you may consider that all things ~~are~~ rightly weighed and accounted for, they are not really so very numerous, as is usually pretended in such cases. For generally there are no more than Three or Four, or some such number of cunning and designing Men who have made it all along their business to be very Popular, and hapning to be placed in higher Stations than ordinary, get thereby the advantage of looking big, and of having their Learning and Integrity measured by the greatness of their preferments: These Men commonly are the sole Authors of such revolts: whilst most of the rest of the same Cloth, without any sufficient use of their own Reason, or due Consideration, suffer themselves to be wholly led and prevailed upon by the meer force of the others great Name and Authority, and the hopes of rising higher by their means: being scarcely able when they come from them to give another any account, or so much as barely to recite those Arguments, by which yet they pretend themselves to have been converted. Now all these, (maugre their outward shape and habit) will certainly have too great an honour done them,

them, if they be allowed to pass so much as but for half men. They are to be lookt upon only as a sequacious sort of meer Animals, or rather indeed as so many several Cyphers which signify and stand for just nothing at all in themselves, but serve only to shew how considerable a Figure the others make in the World, and how much value themselves put on them, upon that account. So that you see, take but away all these, (as in all justice they ought to be substracted from the account) and there will be no great cause to brag of Multitude. And however, let even all these also go into the Tale, and help to make up the Dead weight; yet the total Sum of such lapsed Teachers in any particular Age, or Place (which is the only matter of scandal I am now endeavouring to remove) would be found very inconsiderable, and just next to nothing, in comparison of the far greater numbers of those, who in all other Ages and Places, have stood firm and constant, to the very last, in the same right principles and practices, notwithstanding all the severest tryals and temptations to the contrary. Add but all these, I say, to the smaller Catalogue of those survivors, who still tread in the same holy steps, (as all holy men whether living, or dead, are to be looked upon to belong to, and make up the same general Communion and Society) and then, what a glorious Army of Martyrs? what a noble Company of Confessors will you behold, for your comfort and encouragement? Enough, for number as well as quality, to dazle the Eyes, and confound the Hearts, of all those, who may for the present happen to joyn hand in hand in wickedness, and endeavour to countenance and encourage one another therein, from the consideration of their so much vaunted of Multitudes.

But still, suppose the far greater numbers were really on that side, on which they are pretended; yet what force or prevalence ought this consideration to have upon any wise man's mind, who is resolved to deal faithfully with his own Soul, and to be true to his own Spiritual Interest? Certainly, none at all; unless it could be first proved, That the major part of Pastors, do always, in all particulars, necessarily determine themselves according to the measures of Truth and Righteousness. Than which (though I could heartily wish it were true) no-

thing is more notoriously false, according to all Experience. For do we not find that the Priests and Scribes, and the whole Jewish Sanhedrim in general agreed together upon the condemnation even of our Blessed Saviour, whilst *Joseph of Arimathea* was the only person we read of who consented not thereto? And who knows not, what, and how many gross errors, both in matters of Belief and Practice, were for several hundred years together, promoted and maintained in the Christian World, by the far greater part of Doctors generally had in reputation for their Piety as well as Learning; some few only in their several Ages, still gainsaying and withstanding the same?

So that Protestants, of all others, ought by no means, in any case of this nature, to admit of Arguments drawn from this Topick, the weakness of which upon other occasions, themselves have so abundantly exposed, and therefore most determinedly exploded.

In merely civil Affairs, indeed, there is some reason, that things should be carried according to the majority of Votes; because where there is the greatest number, there is generally also on the same side, the greatest force and interest, which is much to be considered in such matters: But in a case of Conscience, or in matters of Right and Wrong, Truth and Falshood, numbers are not at all to be regarded; nor does it behoove a man, to tell Heads, but only to weigh Arguments. Nay, indeed Multitude is so far from being always a good Argument of Truth, or of the Righteousness of a cause, that considering the general frailty and corruption of man kind, it is rather to be lookt upon, as the quite contrary; and we have some reason, at least to suspect (where the case is before any thing doubtful) that, that may be the wrong way, in which we behold most men walking; especially when it happens to be very manifest, how much their secular Interest is also to be met with in the same paths. Besides, we are assured from Christ himself. That his Flock is small, in comparison of others, who are therefore called *the World*; *That the many go in the broad, but wrong way; whilst straight is the Way, and narrow is the Gate that leadeth unto Life, and few there are that find it.* And God himself forewarns us, that in any case, *We follow not a Multitude to do evil.* Moreover, we may remember for how long

long time together Gods Church consisted within the narrow compass of one small Nation; and before that, how 'twas scarcely visible any where else, save in the one Family of the Father of the faithful. Nay, in the time of *Athanasius*, it seem'd to be reduced to a single man, whilst the whole World was turned Arrian: And though I doubt not, but that there were several others who believed rightly; yet that Bishop was the only Person, who durst at that time so openly appear for the Truth; and was often removed from his place, severely persecuted, and banished for doing so.

Now, all this being well considered, what reason hast thou, to be at any time scandalized at the fewness of those who stand to their principles in the time of tryal? Or rather, why should not those few no less learned and far more pious persons, whom thou well perceivest to be in good earnest about Religion, in that they persist in the belief and practice of what themselves have taught, even when it is quite contrary to their worldly Interest, and they meet with nothing but reproch and persecution for so doing; why should not the example of these few, I say, be far more powerful to confirm thee in the truth, than that of the other to scandalize thee out of it, especially; when it shall happen to be very notorious, by what sordid motives they were prevailed upon, either to renounce their first principles, or grossly contradict the same by their following practice; consider likewise, that they who continue firm and constant, and help to make up the small, but Blessed number, are not themselves at all staggered, but rather (in some respects) rejoyce and triumph at their very fewness: And why then shouldst thou be ready to take so much offence thereat? Or, since they are already so few, how canst thou find in thy Heart, to make them still fewer, by thine own revolt? These considerations now may I hope, serve to answer the usual Objections, and prove a good Antidote against those scandals which are apt to arise from the Observation of the suppos'd Picty, Learning, and far greater number of those who are at any time, lapsed from the truth.

But Secondly, As the most effectual Remedy against the poyson of such examples, endeavour above all things, sufficiently to fortify your Hearts with godly sincerity; look that you

espouse right principles out of right ends, and be sure you perform every Duty for God's sake, and as in his presence. For when once a firm Habit of rectified Intentions and singleness of Heart has (as certainly it will) enabled a Man thoroughly to relish Duty, and to *Taste, and see how good the Lord is*, he will be sure to experience such unspeakable Joy, solid Pleasure and satisfaction therein, that he would not for the whole World part with it; and they must first persuade him out of his very Senses, as well as his Reason, who would prevail with him, to do any thing by which, he knows he must forfeit the same. So that after thus antidoted with Godly sincerity, let other men, in whole shoals together, or (if you please) in the most affected processions, go to make shipwreck of their Faith, and of a good Conscience; let thousands daily fall on thy right hand, and ten thousand on thy left, the Plague shall not come nigh thee, the Infection of such examples shall never once touch thee.

Thirdly, Let the matter of scandal be in it self never so great, yet consider, that, in such cases, God many times permits a powerful occasion to be administred, whereby so many Doctors and of so great a name (though all along no better than close Hypocrites) should at last unmask themselves and fall so foully, on purpose to try the strength of thy Faith; to make thee become a Spectacle to Men and Angels; and that it may appear how sincere and well-grounded thou art in the Truth, who canst not be shaken out of thy Duty and Religion, by all the contrary Winds of false Doctrin, or the greatest Earth-quake of a general Apostasie. Why shouldest thou therefore be so much troubled or offended at that, which (if it be not thine own fault) will certainly tend to the great encrease of thy Renown and Happiness? For the more difficult thy Tryal and Temptation, so much the more eminent and remarkable will be thy Vertue in the Conquest, so much the greater the Honour of the Triumph, and so much the more Glorious thy Reward and Happiness hereafter.

Fourthly, It may very much help to abate thy Scandal, when thou shalt consider the many and great benefits, which usually redound to the Church of God in general, whilst they who are approved, or the contrary, are hereby made manifest.

For,

For, First, such discovery does, for the time to come, more effectually secure pious Persons from being any way misled out of their Duties, by the corrupt examples or persuasions of concealed Hypocrites. Familiar converse with ill men is very dangerous and infectious, and apt insensibly to taint, and make a man tread awry, even before he is aware. And when many secret Hypocrites are mixed together in the same Communion with the Faithful, and seem to worship God at the same Altar; good men are apt to suspect no harm from them, but to give ear to their Insinuations and Advices; whilst false Friends are always, upon this very account, most dangerous to the Church, and the true Members of it in particular: But now when such men have discovered and unmask'd themselves by their open Apostasy, every sincere person is enabled to look upon them as downright Enemies, and is accordingly sufficiently prepared and antidoted against their Poison.

Secondly, When sincere persons come once generally and certainly to know one another, (as by this means they always do) they then become hereby the better enabled, to love, value, and trust, each other; and have a fitter opportunity most closely and securely, to combine their several Prayers, Counsels, and pious Endeavours, for mutual edification, and the Churches welfare.

Thirdly, When, by such Lapses, the Chaff is well sifted and winnowed from the Wheat, so that they who still continue in their Integrity, and stand to their Principles, have sufficiently discovered themselves to be sincere and hearty; then may that particular Church, (howsoever greatly decreased in the numbers of its outward Members) upon good reason, conclude it self in a more safe and hopeful Condition, than it was before; as more immediately entitled to God's favour and protection; and now, by such purgation, become more strong, sound, and healthful, in its Constitution, is therefore far better qualified for a prosperous State.

Fourthly, The discovery and manifestation which such Lapses make, is of singular benefit to the Church of God, as it tends most effectually to secure them from that dangerous error and folly, by which even many well-meaning men are sometimes liable to be overtaken, whilst they are too apt to forget, that their spiritual

ritual Treasures are conveyed to them, through the mediation of earthen Vessels as the Instruments: By the experimental frailty of which, they are sufficiently instructed, for the time to come, not to depend so much upon any man's meer Authority, or Example, howsoever had generally in repute, both for Piety and Learning; to call, or make no meer man on Earth the absolute master of their Faith, nor to have mens persons so in admiration: But to learn to esteem of Teachers chiefly for their Works sake. In short, when they, who before were too apt to favour and follow the Seducers, shall evidently perceive how grossly they contradict themselves, how foully they have fallen, and that they really mind nothing but the World; such men are from hence, presently moved to forsake them, and to betake themselves to more sincere Guides. So that God's faithful Ministers, notwithstanding (as it sometimes falls out) the weakness of their bodily presence, or their less share of Eloquence, become at last, by this means, to be more lov'd valu'd, and duly rely'd upon by their respective Flocks.

Fifthly, When God sees fit that such a Church shall come afterwards to be well settled and composed again, that manifestation which the former Lapses and Revolts have made both of mens Integrity and Abilities, or of the contrary, must needs prove of admirable use; the better to direct those, who are in Authority so to do, towards the choice of fit Spiritual Officers, and Governours, and to enable them to know, what particular persons are to be rejected, and who most safely to be promoted to places of greatest Trust and Eminency in the Church: ~~then~~ which scarcely any thing can be of greater Consequence or Importance. And accordingly, they who either Lapsed from the Faith in the times of Persecution, or were guilty of any heinous Crime, were hereupon, in the Primitive times for ever after held incapable (though they did repent) of coming to any Office in the Church, or were excluded and deposed therefrom, if before they hapned to enjoy such Dignity. Whilst, on the contrary, no Persons were thought so fit, to be promoted to Places Ecclesiastical, (though perhaps, at the same time, less eminent in Learning) as they who had manifested their Firmness and Integrity under such Tryals. For the first of these, we may give credit to St. *Augustin*, whose words are these in his 50. Ep.

30. Ep. to Boniface; *Ut enim constitueretur in Ecclesia, ne quisquam post alicujus criminis penitentiam, clericatum accipiat, &c.* That Constitution of the Church, by which it is provided, that they who have been guilty of any heinous Crime, should never, even after their Repentance, be suffered to take upon them, or return to the Office of a Minister, does not proceed from any despair of their Forgiveness, but only from a necessary rigour and strictness of Discipline. By which (he saith) they more effectually consulted both the safety and humility of such Persons; intimating likewise, a little afterwards, what he thought was the reason that induced the Ancients to make so severe a Canon. *Experti, credo, aliquorum fidas penitentias, per affectum honorum potentias.* Having experienced the counterfeits Repentances of some, merely to attain to, or regain such honourable Stations. Which they thought might far better be supplied, by those whose approved constancy and fidelity might more securely be relied upon. And remarkable to this purpose is the Epistle of St. Cyprian, concerning his having Ordained one Celerinus, to be a Reader in the Church of Carthage; for this was an Office, in those days, highly honourable. This Celerinus had shewn himself an approved Soldier of Christ, gloriously Triumphant over a long Imprisonment, and all the most exquisite Torments. Concerning whom therefore the Holy Bishop, writes to his Flock in these Words of Commendation. *Hunc ad nos, fratres dilecti sumi, cum tanta Domini dignatione venientem, &c.* This Man, most beloved Brethren, coming to us with such singular Approbation of our great Lord, and most illustrious even according to the Testimony of his very Persecutors; How can we more fitly dispose of, than by placing him in the Reading Desk, that is, upon the Tribunal of the Church, that so, by the advantage of a higher Place, become, according to his deserved Honour, the more conspicuous to the whole Congregation, he may read those Precepts and that Gospel of our Lord, which he does so faithfully and courageously follow? Let that Voice of his, which has so manfully confessed Christ, be daily heard in the Repetition of those holy Words, which our Lord himself has spoken. Nor is there any thing, in which a Confessor can be more profitable to the Brethren, than in this, that, whilst the Gospel is pronounced out of his Mouth, whosoever hears the same, may be thereby invited, to imitate the Faith of the Reader.

But I am sensible I have made too long a Digression. To return therefore to what I more immediately designed. Since, in all these respects, the discovery of those who are Sincere and Faithful, and who are not, is a thing so highly advantageous to the Church of God, How can we then suffer our selves to be so much troubled and offended at those previous Lapses and Revolts, which tend to make so profitable a manifestation?

I shall now mention but one Remedy more; and yet I know not, whether or no it be so proper for me to do it, because it is such, as is not within the compass of their own reach or power to be furnished with who are liable to take the offence. But however, when God's Providence (as sometimes it does) is pleased to administer the same, it proves as effectual an Antidote against such Scandal as any of the former. If any number of such lapsed Persons, could, upon better consideration, be brought in due season, publicly to acknowledge and confess their Error, and the corrupt motives

tives which induced them thereto; and that whilst they still continue under the same Circumstances and powerful Temptations, which first prevailed upon them to fall into it; this, above all, would mightily tend to satisfy the minds of weaker Christians, and take off the former Scandal. And how should any thing of Foolish Shame, or Worldly Interest be able to hinder them from this performance? If they would but seriously consider, that nothing is, even for the present, more truly Honourable in the judgment of all Wise Men, than for them to do this, and withal call to mind that eternal Shame and Confusion, which will be sure to cover their Faces at the last Day, if now they do neglect it. Let that astonishing Question of our Saviour continually dwell upon their minds; *What will it profit a Man to gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* Let them think how many Thousands of poor Souls they must one Day answer for, who are like to be undone for ever by their bad Examples; and let them also reflect, when they shall come (as very shortly they must) to lie upon a Death-bed, and all that either they have kept, or gotten by their shameful Prevarication must be parted with for ever; what an unspeakable comfort it would then be for them to have the Witness of a good Conscience, and to be able to say, truly, with St. Paul, *I am clear from the Blood of all Men.* To conclude, I shall leave all such revolted Teachers to consider with themselves how nearly they may be concerned in that Exhortation, as well as severe Threatning of Christ to the Angel, Bishop or Pastor, of the Church of *Ephesus*, Rev. 2. 5. *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* And thus I have done with the last general thing I designed, viz. To offer to you some proper Considerations and Advice, by way of Antidote or Remedy, against the Poison and Infection of such most Scandalous Examples.

And now, perhaps, some may expect from me (a Task which I as easily could, as I heartily wish I could not perform) that I should still descend to a particular Application of what I have hitherto delivered only in a more general way. But I desire herein to be excused; not that I dare not, for if (all Circumstances considered) I could apprehend this to be such, I thank God, I dare do any thing, that I think to be my Duty, whatsoever it may happen to cost me for so doing. But I waive it, because it seems to me a thing altogether unnecessary to bestow any Labour that way, where the case is so evident and notorious, that every one, I know, has already prevented me therein, and can easily make the Application himself, without any other help: And besides, because (to speak sincerely) I look upon this as an Argument far more fit for *Tears* than *Speech*. And therefore one thing only I shall venture to add, as to my own particular; which as (God be praised) I can say with much Truth, so I hope I may say it also, at this time, without Vanity; nor do I doubt, notwithstanding the general Apostasie, but that many others are able to say the same. — I thank God, I have been hitherto so happy, as that I have never delivered to you any Doctrin, but what I first both firmly believed, and endeavoured also, as well as I could, to practise my own self. And this I affirm, with a more particular respect to the true

true Church of *England* Doctrin concerning Loyalty and Non-resistance. Of which whatsoever has been lately said, or done by some Men to the contrary, has served only (if possible) still more to confirm me in the Truth of my own Principles. And if, upon this very account, I must be at length so unhappy, as to be forced from my Place and Function, God's will be done. I hope I am prepared to bear this also (like all other meer Misfortunes) both Patiently and with Thanksgiving.

And, indeed, if there were no more in the case than this, 'tis; I think, even high time to have done Preaching in that Place, where a Man can be no longer permitted to do so, but upon such hard Conditions only, alter the performance of which he cannot reasonably expect to be ever any more believed in what he says: Whilst for my own part, I shall ever look upon this of my Text to be both true Gospel and sound Reason too: And shall therefore be far from making any Question of it, but that he *Who teacheth another, ought to teach himself also.*

And accordingly, I shall conclude all with that excellent Prayer in our Church Litany, which, I am confident, needs no mending, but would effectually serve to mend them, who may think it does, did they but as heartily make use of it; as I desire you all to join with me therein at present.—

May it please thee, O Lord, to illuminaue all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; with true Knowledge and Understanding of thy Word, and grant, that both by their Preaching and Living, they may set it forth and shew it accordingly; and that thy Church, being always preserved from false Teachers and Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true Pastors, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

F I N I S.

— Some of the more material Faults of the Press.

Page 12. line 10. for he spoken read he had spoken. p.26 l.28. f.that case
r.the case. p.28.l.24. f.indisectible, than infallible to their Understand-
ings, as to their Manners; r. indisectible as to their Manners than infallible
as to their Understandings. p.29 l.6.f. therefore r.therefrom.